

FICKEISEN PLAINS CACTUS
(*Pediocactus peeblesianus* var. *fickeiseniae*)

STATUS: Proposed endangered (77 FR 60510, October 3, 2012) with critical habitat.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: This small 76 mm (3 in) tall and 38 mm (1.5 in) in diameter cactus has small (25 mm/1 in) flowers that are cream, yellow, or yellowish-green. The spines are corky with the central spine [9.5 mm (3/8 inch long)] ashy white and pointed up. Tubercles form a spiral pattern around plant. This cactus retracts into gravelly soils after flowering and fruiting.

HABITAT: The species occurs on shallow soils derived from exposed layers of Kaibab limestone. Most populations occur on the margins of canyon rims, on flat terraces or benches, or on the toe of well-drained hills with less than 20 percent slope; at elevations between 1,280 to 1,814 m (4,200 to 5,950 ft). Habitat of the Fickeisen plains cactus is within the Plains and Great Basin grasslands and Great Basin desert scrub vegetation communities.

RANGE: Historic: Unknown but similar to the current distribution.

Current: It is known to occur in widely scattered, small populations on the Colorado Plateau in Coconino and Mohave Counties. The range of the cactus encompasses the Arizona Strip (i.e., the area north of the Colorado River to the Arizona-Utah border) from Mainstreet Valley in Mohave County to House Rock Valley in Coconino County, along the canyon rims of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers, to the area of Gray Mountain, and along the canyon rims of Cataract Canyon on the Coconino Plateau.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Current threats include trampling by livestock, nonnative invasive species, rodent and rabbit herbivory, drought and climate change that exacerbate the effects of small population size. The species is a narrow endemic restricted to Kaibab limestone-derived soils. Because of its rarity and disjunct occurrence, this cactus is vulnerable to depopulation by damage to areas where it occurs. The species seems to have low reproductive capacity, even during favorable weather conditions.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: The cactus occurs on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, Navajo Nation, and Arizona State Land Department. It also occurs on private land.

NOTES: Critical habitat is being proposed for a total of 19,901 hectares (49,186 acres) in Coconino and Mohave counties (77 FR 60510). The cactus is also protected by the Arizona Native Plants Law as a highly safeguarded native plant.